from the nest. The nest was about 16ft. from the ground in a salmon gum. We saw the duck enter several times as the tree is not far from our lounge window. Early one morning my husband heard her making an unusual call and drew my attention to the tree. The two parents were on the ground by the tree and the mother would call, with much flapping. A little white ball was seen to jump up and out of the hole. We could hear each hit the ground quite plainly. The mother would hurry over and herd the little one in by the tree trunk and then call again. This went on until they were all down. She listened for a while with her head on one side, and then the whole family set off for the lake, with the father coming along behind. The lake was a good quarter of a mile away.

—(Mrs.) R. A. METCALF, Lake King.

Egg Deposition by Golden Bronze Cuckoo in a Yellow-tailed Thornbill's Nest.—On 15th October, 1966, near my home at Seabrook, 4 miles south-east of Northam, I found a nest of the Yellow-tailed Thornbill, *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*, in a Needlewood tree, *Hakea preissii*, at approximately 4ft. from the ground.

Without disturbing the nest I walked on for about 20 yards when a bird flew past me, flying fast and direct, in the direction from which I had come. A moment later, on hearing a disturbance at the nest, I returned to find the Thornbill very agitated, and the Bronze Cuckoo in the entrance to the domed nest. The head and half its body were inside the nest but its tail and one wing spread out were outside. Both wing and tail were pressed against the outside of the nest. I had the impression that the bird was thus supporting itself.

I caught the Cuckoo and after photographing it released it. It was a Golden Bronze Cuckoo, *Chrysococcyx lucidus*. On examining the nest I found two eggs there. One was the Thornbill's and the other was of similar size but was plain olive-brown, a typical egg of the Golden Bronze Cuckoo.

I think I was witness to an exceedingly rarely-observed occurrence, the egg deposition by a Cuckoo into a domed nest. The manner of so doing has long been a matter of controversy, whether the Cuckoo first lays its egg outside the nest and then transfers it in its beak, whether it projects the egg into the nest, or whether the Cuckoo actually lays the egg inside the nest. The circumstances surrounding my observation suggest that the first explanation applied in this case, as I felt that if the bird was laying an egg, whilst in that position, the egg would fall to the ground.

However, Robin Hill (*Australian Birds*, 1967, p. 117), states: "In the case of birds with domed nests being chosen it was believed that the female Cuckoo laid her egg on the ground and then deposited it with her bill through the small entrance to the nest. Observation suggests that this never happens. In fact the Cuckoo usually props herself, with wings and tail spread for support against the nest entrance, and ejects her egg into the nest."

The subject is reviewed in considerable detail by Herbert Friedmann (*Bull. U.S. Nat. Mus.*, 25, 1968: 81) who provides a variety of instances from Australian ornithological publications which satisfy him that "there is sufficient evidence to establish the conclusion that mandibular egg placement does occur. By virtue of the behavioural pliability behind this fact, nests that would otherwise be unavailable to the Cuckoos are made accessible for their parasitism." Friedmann concedes, nevertheless, that this can be only an occasional rather than a regular pattern because "a bird nest too small to accommodate the body of the parasitic hen would usually prove inadequate to hold the young Cuckoo after the first week or 10 days of its nestling growth." One must doubt, however, whether this applies to *Acanthiza* hosts for young Cuckoos *do* survive in their nests.

No mention is made by Friedmann of the method favoured by Robin Hill. This projection method is fully discussed by E. C. Stuart Baker *(Cuckoo Problems,* 1942, p. 116) and he accepts its occurrence, particularly "when the nests are in holes into which she cannot enter in order to lay her egg in the ordinary way." C. J. O. Harrison *(The Emu,* 69, 1969: 178) also reviews the field evidence and feels that the theory of mandibular transfer lacks crucial proof and "that there is at present no satisfactory evidence that any Cuckoo species deposits its eggs in the nest of other birds except by laying directly into the nest."

—A. L. MILHINCH, Seabrook.

The foregoing notes were submitted to Mr. Stephen Marchant, Melbourne, who is devoting special attention to the problem of egg deposition by Cuckoos into domed nests. He comments as follows: "Mr. Milhinch's observation is most interesting and valuable, but unfortunately cannot be taken as conclusive evidence of egg-laying by a Cuckoo in a domed nest. From the account, it seems that Mr. Milhinch did not inspect the nest of the Yellow-tailed Thornbill before the Cuckoo's visit, and therefore it is not certain that it did not already contain a Cuckoo's egg. Moreover, because he presumably caught the Cuckoo at the nest before it had finished whatever it was doing, we cannot be sure that it was not going to remove the eggs as Chalk *(Emu* 49, 1950: 219-220) observed.

"Hill's statement is probably based on an assessment of the literature and I would hold that it is correct because almost all the published statements that I have seen on deposition of the egg by the bill are open to the sort of criticism made above on the present observation. My own impression has been that Friedmann accepted too readily the evidence for deposition of the egg by the bill; I would claim that none of it is sufficiently firmly based. On the other hand, there have been reports of Cuckoo's eggs in nests in holes and similar places, which a Cuckoo could not possibly enter (see, for example, Baker, *Cuckoo Problems,* 1942). Thus, in spite of what seems to me to be unsatisfactory evidence for positively observed deposition by the bill, the matter remains a possibility and the incident, as described by Mr. Milhinch, emphasizes the vital importance of letting such events take their full course without interference and of observing most closely and critically everything that happens."

An Early Breeding Record of the Black-faced Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax fuscescens.*—The Black-faced Cormorant is recorded as a summer breeder in Western Australian waters. Serventy and Whittell *(Birds of Western Australia)* give December-January as the egg laying period and the clutch as of 2 eggs.

Accompanied by Mr. T. Allen, I visited Lion Island in Esperance Bay on August 4, 1970 and found a breeding colony of this species totalling 36 nests, on a slope 100 ft. above the sea. Two nests contained 4 eggs, 20 with 3 eggs, 2 with 2 eggs, 3 with one egg and 9 nests were at various stages of construction.

A subsequent visit on September 12, 1970 revealed that the breeding attempt was near a total failure, most nests containing small dead young. The colony had moved eastwards down the slope, where many pairs were building new nests or had commenced to lay. The weather between these visits was constantly rough and with the lack of shallow water feeding grounds the cormorants were possibly unable to brood and obtain sufficient food.

The small increase in this colony, which was recorded at 25 pairs in 1944, may be attributed to these circumstances and summer breeding the result of successive failures during spring.

—TONY E. BUSH, Wubin.